

United States Government and Civics

Course Description: *Students will study the purposes, principles, and practices of American government as established by the Constitution. Students are expected to understand their rights and responsibilities as citizens and how to exercise these rights and responsibilities in local, state, and national government. Students will learn the structure and processes of the government of the state of Tennessee and various local governments. The reading of primary source documents is a key feature of United States Government and Civics standards.*

Principles of United States Government

Students explain the fundamental principles and moral values of the American Republic as expressed in the Constitution and other essential documents of American democracy.

GC.1 Analyze the influence of ancient Greek, Roman, and leading European political thinkers such as John Locke, Charles-Louis Montesquieu, Niccolò Machiavelli, and William Blackstone on the development of American government. (H, P)

GC.2 Examine the character of American democracy as articulated by Alexis de Tocqueville. (H, P)

GC.3 Describe the purposes and functions of government as outlined in the Preamble to the Constitution. (P)

GC.4 Explain how the Constitution reflects a balance between the classical republican concern with promotion of the public good and the classical liberal concern with protecting individual rights. (H, P)

GC.5 Explain why the Founding Fathers established a constitutional system that limited the power of the governors and the governed. (H, P)

GC.6 Describe the systems of enumerated and shared powers, the role of organized interests (Federalist Number 10), checks and balances (Federalist Number 51), the importance of an independent judiciary (Federalist Number 78), enumerated powers, rule of law, federalism, popular sovereignty, and civilian control of the military. (P)

GC.7 Analyze how the Bill of Rights limits the powers of the federal government and state governments, including the 9th and 10th amendments. (P)

GC.8 Analyze the tensions within our constitutional democracy and the importance of maintaining a balance between the following concepts: (H, P)

- Majority rule and individual rights
- Liberty and equality
- State and national authority in a federal system
- Civil disobedience and the rule of law
- Freedom of the press and the right to a fair trial
- Relationship of religion and government

Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Read: excerpts from the Magna Carta; Mayflower Compact; English Bill of Rights; *Two Treatises of Civil Government*, John Locke; Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson; excerpts from The Federalist Papers – 1, 9, 10, 39, 51, 78; excerpts from the Constitution; excerpts from *Democracy in America*, Alexis De Tocqueville.

Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Consider: excerpts from “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” Martin Luther King, Jr.; “The Ballot or the Bullet” speech, Malcolm X; Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom, 1786.

Branches of Government

Students analyze the unique roles and responsibilities of the three branches of government as established by the Constitution.

GC.9 Analyze Article I of the Constitution as it relates to the legislative branch, including eligibility for office and lengths of terms of representatives and senators; election to office; the roles of the House and Senate in impeachment proceedings; the role of the vice president; the enumerated legislative powers; and the process by which a bill becomes a law. (P)

GC.10 Explain the process through which the Constitution can be amended. (P)

GC.11 Identify current representatives from Tennessee in the legislative branch of the national government. (P)

GC.12 Analyze Article II of the Constitution as it relates to the executive branch, including eligibility for office and length of term, election to and removal from office, the oath of office, and the enumerated executive powers. (P)

GC.13 Analyze Article III of the Constitution as it relates to judicial power, including the length of terms of judges and the jurisdiction of the United States Supreme Court. (P)

GC.14 Explain the processes of selection and confirmation of Supreme Court justices. (P)

Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Read: excerpts from the Constitution; the Bill of Rights

The Supreme Court and the Constitution

Students summarize landmark United States Supreme Court interpretations of the Constitution and its amendments.

GC.15 Understand the changing interpretations of the Bill of Rights over time, including interpretations of the basic freedoms (religion, speech, press, petition, and assembly) articulated in the First Amendment and the due process and equal-protection-of-the-law clauses of the 14th Amendment, including: (H, P)

- Mapp v. Ohio
- Tinker v. Des Moines
- Engel v. Vitale
- Schenck v. United States

- Gideon v. Wainwright
- Brandenburg v. Ohio
- Texas v. Johnson
- Reno v. American Civil Liberties Union

GC.16 Analyze judicial activism and judicial restraint and the effects of each policy over the decades (e.g., the Warren and Rehnquist courts). (H, P)

GC.17 Evaluate the effects of the United States Supreme Court's interpretations of the Constitution in Marbury v. Madison, McCulloch v. Maryland, and United States v. Nixon, with emphasis on the arguments espoused by each side in these cases. (H, P)

GC.18 Explain the controversies that have resulted over changing interpretations of civil rights, including those in: (H, P)

- Plessy v. Ferguson
- Brown v. Board of Education
- Miranda v. Arizona
- Regents of the University of California v. Bakke
- United States v. Virginia (VMI).

Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Read: excerpts from the United States Supreme Court cases listed in the standards

Federal Power

Students analyze the scope and function of federal power.

GC.19 Explain how conflicts between levels of government and branches of government are resolved (supremacy clause, checks and balances). (P)

GC.20 Analyze the processes of lawmaking, including the role of lobbying and the media. (P)

GC.21 Identify the organization and jurisdiction of federal, state, and local courts and the interrelationships among them. (P)

GC.22 Analyze the scope of presidential power and decision-making through examination of significant examples such as the Cuban Missile Crisis, passage of Great Society legislation, War Powers Act, Gulf War, and intervention in Bosnia. (H, P)

GC.23 Identify and explain powers that the Constitution gives to the President and Congress in the area of foreign affairs. (P)

Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Read: excerpts from the Constitution and the Tennessee Constitution

Elections and the Political Process

Students evaluate issues regarding campaigns for national, state, and local elective offices.

GC.24 Analyze the origin, development, and role of political parties. (H, P)

GC.25 Explain the history of the nomination process for presidential candidates and the increasing importance of primaries in general elections. (H, P)

GC.26 Evaluate the roles of polls and campaign advertising, and examine the controversies over campaign funding. (P)

GC.27 Describe the means that citizens use to participate in the political process (e.g., voting, campaigning, lobbying, filing a legal challenge, demonstrating, petitioning, picketing, and running for political office). (P)

GC.28 Explain the features of direct democracy in numerous states (e.g., the process of initiatives, referendums, and recall elections). (P)

GC.29 Analyze trends in voter turnout and the causes and effects of reapportionment and redistricting. (P)

GC.30 Analyze the function of the electoral college. (H, P)

Influence of Media

Students evaluate the influence of the media on American political life.

GC.31 Explain the meaning and importance of a free and responsible press. (P)

GC.32 Describe the roles of broadcast, print, and electronic media, including the Internet, as means of communication in American politics. (P)

GC.33 Explain how public officials use the media to communicate with the citizenry and to shape public opinion. (P)

Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens

Students evaluate the scope and limits of rights and obligations as democratic citizens, the relationships among them, and how they are secured.

GC.34 Analyze the meaning and importance of each of the rights guaranteed under the Bill of Rights and how each is secured (e.g., freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly, petition, and privacy). (P)

GC.35 Explain how economic rights are secured and their importance to the individual and to society including the right to acquire, use, transfer, and dispose of property; right to choose one's work; right to join or not join labor unions; copyrights and patents. (P)

GC.36 Describe the individual's legal obligations to obey the law, serve as a juror, and pay taxes. (P)

GC.37 Describe the obligations of civic-mindedness, including voting, being informed on civic issues, volunteering and performing public service, and serving in the military or alternative service. (P)

GC.38 Describe the reciprocity between rights and obligations, that is enjoying rights means fulfilling certain obligations and respecting the rights of others. (P)

GC.39 Explain how one becomes a citizen of the United States, including the process of naturalization. (P)

Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Read: excerpts from the Constitution; the Bill of Rights

Fundamentals of a Free Society

Students evaluate the fundamental values and principles of civil society, their interdependence, and the meaning and importance of those values and principles for a free society.

GC.40 Explain how civil society provides opportunities for individuals to associate for social, cultural, religious, economic, and political purposes. (C, P)

GC.41 Explain how civil society makes it possible for people, individually or in association with others, to bring their influence to bear on government in ways other than voting and elections. (C, P)

GC.42 Examine the historical role of religion and religious diversity and their impact. (C, H, P)

GC. 43 Compare the relationship of government and civil society in constitutional democracies to the relationship of government and civil society in authoritarian and totalitarian regimes. (H, P)

Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Consider: Gettysburg Address, 1863; “Four Freedoms” speech, Franklin Roosevelt; Inaugural Address 1961, John Kennedy; “A Time for Choosing,” 1964 speech, Ronald Reagan.

Civil Rights

Students analyze the development and evolution of civil rights for women and minorities and how these advances were made possible by expanding rights under the Constitution.

GC.44 Describe the Civil Rights Movement and analyze resulting legislation and legal precedents. (C, H, P)

GC.45 Describe the women’s rights movement and analyze resulting legislation and legal precedents. (C, H, P)

GC.46 Identify legislation and legal precedents that established rights for the disabled, Hispanics, Native Americans, Asians, and other minority groups, including the tensions between protected categories (e.g., race, women, veterans) and non-protected ones (United States v. Carolene Products, Adarand Constructors v. Peña). (C, H, P)

Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Consider: excerpts from Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Resolution 1848; “I Have a Dream” speech, Martin Luther King, Jr.

Federal Government and the Economy

Students analyze the influence of the federal government on the American economy.

GC.46 Explain how the role of government in a market economy includes providing for national defense, addressing environmental concerns, defining and enforcing property rights, attempting to make markets more competitive, and protecting consumer rights. (E, P)

GC.47 Explain the aims of government fiscal policies (taxation, borrowing, and spending) and their influence on production, employment, and price levels. (E, P)

GC.48 Describe how the government responds to perceived social needs by providing public goods and services. (E, P)

GC.49 Explain major revenue and expenditure categories and their respective proportions in the budgets of the federal government. (E, P)

GC.50 Describe how federal tax and spending policies affect the national budget and the national debt. (E, P)

Tennessee State and Local Government

Students identify and explain the structure and functions of government at the state and local level in Tennessee.

GC.51 Identify and describe provisions of the Tennessee Constitution that define and distribute powers and authority of the state government. (P)

GC.52 Provide examples of the principles of federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances, and popular sovereignty in the government of the state of Tennessee. (P)

GC.53 Explain the hierarchy and functions of the Tennessee court system. (P)

GC.54 Explain the functions of departments or agencies of the executive branch in the state of Tennessee. (P)

GC.55 Explain the legal, fiscal, and operational relationship between state and local governments in Tennessee. (E, P)

GC.56 Explain the difference between the types of local governments in Tennessee, including county government and city government. (P)

GC.57 Describe how citizens can monitor and influence local and state government as individuals and members of interest groups. (P)

GC.58 Identify specific ways for individuals to serve their communities and participate responsibly in civil society and the political process at local, state, and national levels of government. (C, P)

GC.59 Working with other students, identify a significant public policy issue in the community, gather information about that issue, fairly evaluate the various points of view of competing interests, examine ways of participating in the decision making

process about the issue, and write a position paper or make a presentation on how the issue should be resolved. (C, P)

Primary Documents and Supporting Texts to Read: The Tennessee Constitution

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